WHERE THE HELL DID ALL THE COUNTERCULTURE GO? WHERE DID ALL THE ART GO? WHY IS IT SO IMPOSSIBLE TO IMAGINE A WAY OUT?

Surely, some of us are unhappy. We bitch and we moan about how unjust the world is but why does it all sound and look the same? The proliferation of ten thousand different apolitical aesthetics online has led to a directionless, amorphous youth culture that is obsessed only with its own appearance. Where is the desire for an alternative lifestyle? Why don't we do anything with real grit? Why isn't there anything to fucking do in the Bay after 7pm? Is there anything else? Is it all cubicles or crop rotations? Surely, there has to be an alternative.

AH THERE IS!

Or rather, there was, and there could be again. This zine explores the failures of urban design and methods for alternative living in the Bay.

A DREAMTIME PRODUCTION.

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY AUTUMN WHITE IN 2026

amwillustrator.weebly.com

dreamtime

DreamTime

Now... the most enjoyable, do-it-yourself project
You'll never reap greater reward
more accomplishment than by assembling your own

big hole in a city fence

Find out which facilities are protected with electronics, woodwork or standby power.

Me and my Bolt Cutters,
We feel Fine. But Everybody
is so scared of this gap.

Saying: you require Alcatraz

For most of us, a power failure is hardly more than an inconvenience. It's hard to understand why your life is a serious threat. To life. And property. and others, conditioning

The Way to understanding lies protected in runway lights and control towers. Or crowded public places, industrial complexes involving volatile processes, water and sewage plants.

words, concepts, myths, proverbs, legends and wealth of thought, feeling and tradition that surround those fascinating dots and lines

You're holding a MOST UNUSUAL BOOK
The best view yet of a underlying cognitive secret

you Don't NEED A PERMIT
and you don't need some perfect
counterculture to create "a new way of living"
SHIT kicking is being rediscovered by
a new generation. We join one quest to
become a civil servant.

USING BOLT CUTTERS

DIRECT ACTION SPEAKS LOUDER THAN WORDS!

ISSUE 4

FAILURES of the BAY AREA

I think of dumb investments being mostly buying for the wrong reason or not selling due to greediness.

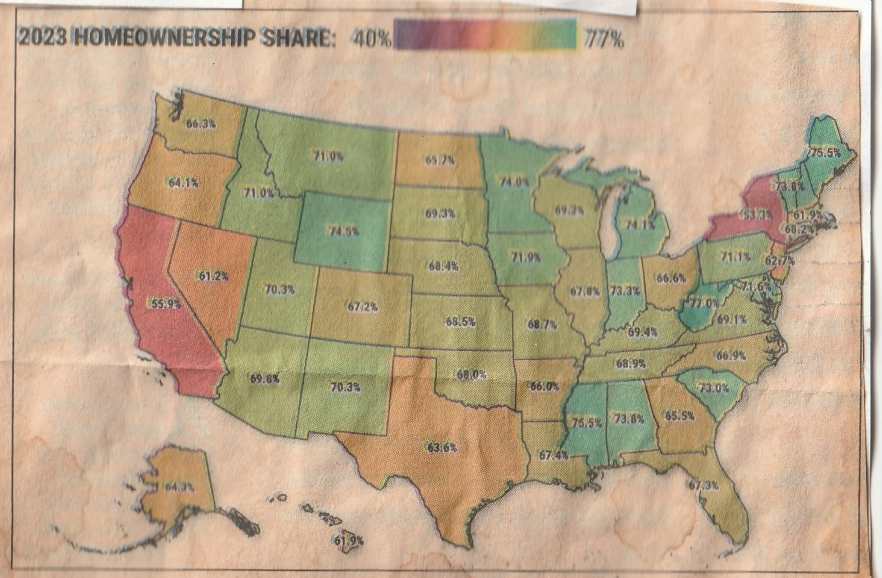
It's lonely at the top

bad news

that businesses may hold onto high prices

your livelihood didn't work

LABOR DONATED



MAP BY FLOURISH

2023 ownership rates

THE REAL STORY WILL BE TOLD

behalf of the Bay Area's low-income workers...

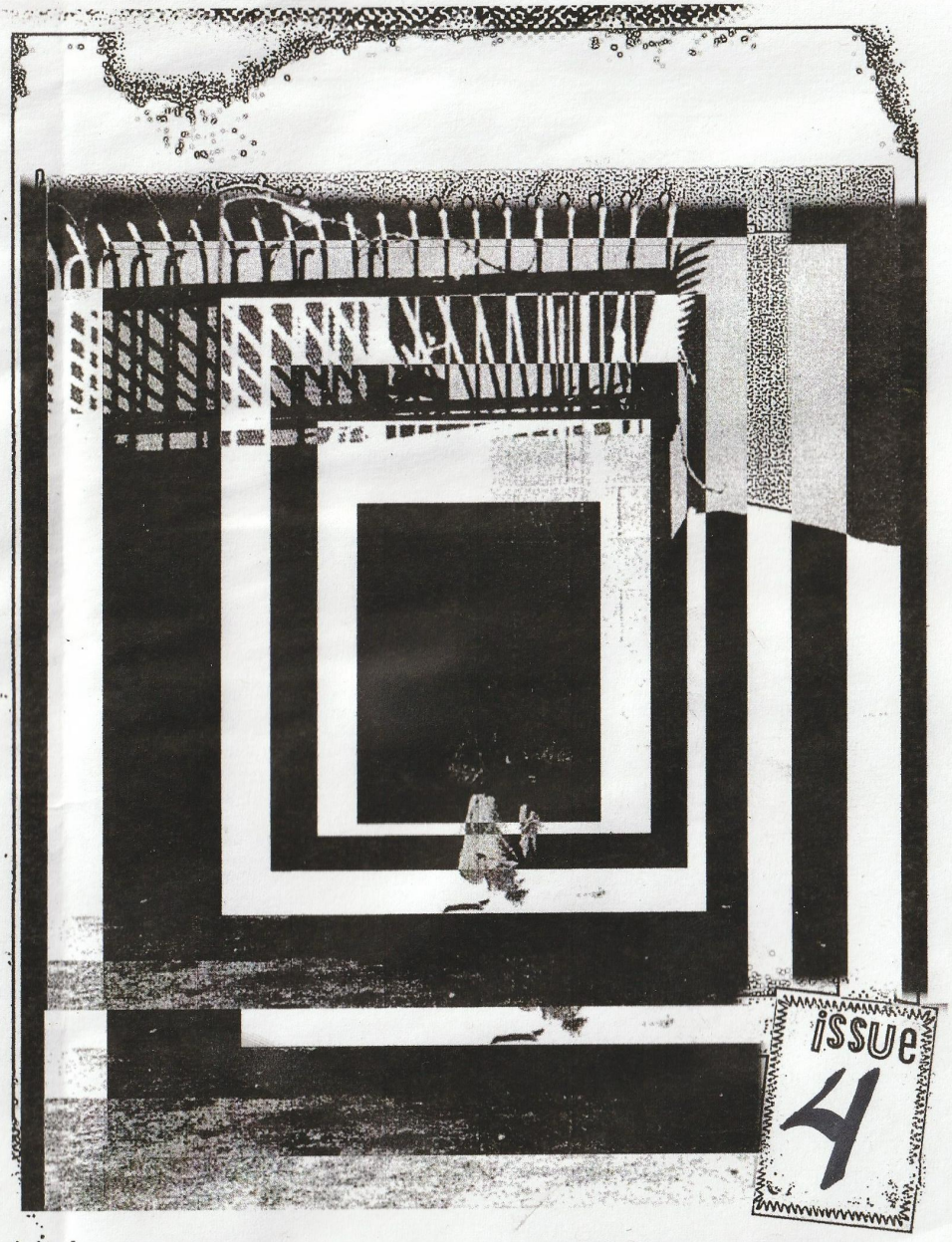
MIKE DAVIS AND THE ABJECT MISERY OF URUBAN DESIGN

L.A. is an evocative symbol: disciplinary, synthetic, and completely miserable. We can take lessons from its decades of redlining and hatred of its low-income residents.

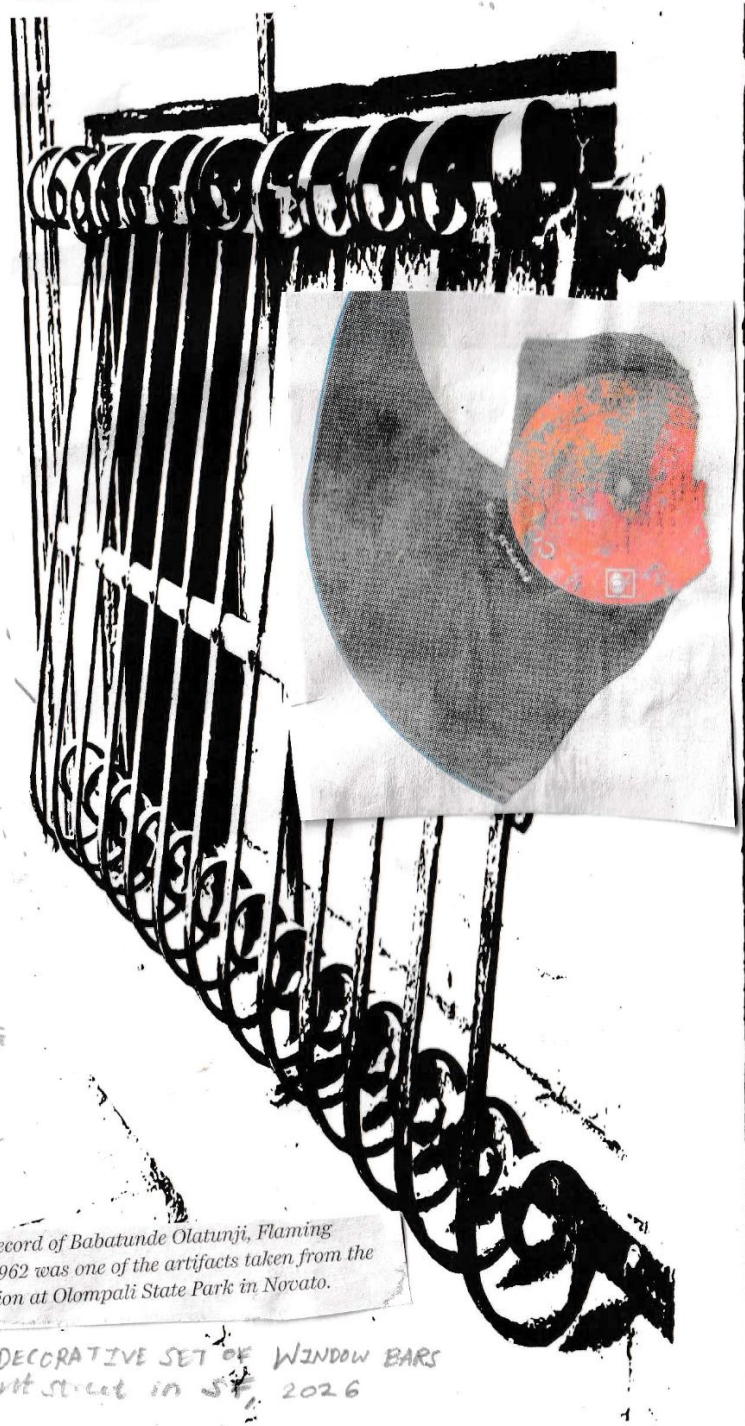
LA is a honeycomb of forbidding, exclusionary suburbs: walled cities of the white and wealthy, sealing entrances from marginalized communities. Both Mike Davis in Fortress Los Angeles and Wolf-Meyer in Theory for the World to Come draw on pop culture images to illustrate the granular experience of trying to survive as a marginal person in LA. It is a city of prisonlike inner neighborhoods (Escape from N.Y and Running Man), stalked by radio-controlled Robocops that erupt into lethal episodes of violence. This is possible because of the lasting impact of Neoliberal policies: "We do now live in "fortress cities," brutally divided into "fortified cells" of affluence and "places of terror" (Davis 155).

LA police and politicians green light the destruction of temporary homes and cardboard shelters. They fortify their dumpsters with spikes and high cages. These policies are hostile, dehumanizing, and draw on Cold War strategies of containment to maintain segregation.

LA criminalizes every shelter, market, idle vendor and child with their police dragnets.



FORTIFIED GARBAGE IN LA



Top: A vinyl record of Babatunde Olatunji, Flaming Drums from 1962 was one of the artifacts taken from the Burdell Mansion at Olompali State Park in Novato.

AND A DECORATIVE SET OF WINDOW BARS on Clement Street in SF, 2026

This practice criminalizes unconventional uses of public space, driving those who depend on informal vending and legal grey areas further into the margins: "…abolish[ing]…safety nets separating misery from catastrophe" (Davis 166).

Public spaces like town squares, markets and parks have been heavily disciplined and stripped of their expressive flexibility. Public activities must be planned for and properly permitted, restricted to certain places, times, and participating actors. Architectural privatization has strangled the public's ability to freely organize and navigate through once spaces. Restricted access to libraries, parks, and other recreational areas causes damage to communities, who need public common ground to escape to and flourish within.

Buttons from Burdell mansion at Olompali State Park

GARBAGE-AND PUBLIC-SPACE-

It's possible to reconstruct the afterimage of a person through their discards: psychobabble self help books, plastic toys, posters, shredded mail, broken dishes, and other future land fillers. My entire career as an archaeologist is build on this knowledge: I reconstitute people's garbage into intelligible stories about our past. We excavate middens and backfills, the imprint of a society on the landscape and in our current era, we produce more gabrage than ever before.

John Chase, in "Glitter Stucco and Dumpster Diving" laments: "...a lush landscape becomes lawn clippings, a cupidlike infant produces soiled pampers," (Chase 175). Every time I toss out a bottle I'm reminded that this object will outlive me. Every garbage bag is a disquietingly intimate glimpse into someone's home, a record of their activities for that week neatly packaged in a bow. This garbage can be used to pry into

their homes, but it can also be selectively carded through for valuable data, scraps to repurpose, and materials to stake claim to public space.

Chase connects this detritus and trash management to vendors, their customers, dumpster diving, and drug usage through a series of anecdotes. While cleaning bottles of amylnitrate from his front yard, he details incoming tides of trash: litter ecosystems associated mostly with the alternate economies and customs of outsiders. Even recycle collectors and salvagers make an appearance, collecting copper wire and bottles, or fencing credit card statements and other valuable strings of data collected from discarded mail. He watches from his windows as pickers and "allyites" live and work beside the dumpsters: incredibly human episodes as they eat, sleep, defecate, scream, and get high just beneath him. For the unhoused, there is no private space to tend to oneself or fall apart. Every breakdown, bath, and meal becomes a public spectacle, and your possessions depend on the "charity" or discards of strangers. Interstitial spaces like alleys and unsurveilled pockets like cemeteries become ideal camping grounds– nobody else wants them, so "...the alley has a human ecology of its own. Any vacuum is quickly filled" (Chase 182).

Urbanites in their new apartments abandon their fantasies of renovating the alley and turning it into a shared garden when they see the tide of trash and their unhoused neighbors staking claim. This is a fundamental failure of their imagination: they will not speak to these neighbors, will not break bread or share space with them. The apartment-dweller's solution to their unhoused neighbors is to abandon shared ground and bar their doors. Fear limits their capacity to make community among their neighbors (the production of which is always more uncomfortable, messy, and anxiety-inducing than we give it credit for).

Garbage is a tactile, material record of occupation and scavenger activity– both human and nonhuman. Mountains of clear and white plastic, Heineken-green glass shards, gnawed bones, and stained, reeking cloth piles up along overpasses and coagulates in rivers– this isn't just because of littering habits or a refusal to clear up. Rather this is a way of staking a claim, asserting which social order demands the rights to space. Creating a place in the traditional sense requires public consciousness, a sense of culture, deliberate gathering and a determined activist stance. Redefining space in the 'right' political way takes time and argument before an area can be meaningfully repurposed to suit public need. Individual activists are rarely effective. Doing things the 'right' way isn't always possible, but many people replicate these tactics out of desperation.

Garbage can break down the boundaries of privatized space, or the fenced utility-zones maintained by the city. These places

become frightening for normative citizens, and an inconvenient, expensive mess for the city. Underpasses are safe in part because they are inconvenient for the city to reach– and with enough cover, they are essentially unsurveilled. Garbage is an inconvenient but deeply useful tactic to convert privatized space into public space– it can be used, alongside graffiti, selective fence-cutting, and squatting practices, to seize an area for public use. Public space is being designed to be increasingly private, exclusionary, and actively hostile: at a certain point, we need to start recognizing the tools we have to clash with the quiet design cold-war being played out in our cities.

There are many examples of Bay Area unhoused people reclaiming parks and river ways. There are abandoned train tracks and dilapidated cars in downtown Campbell just waiting to be trespassed. One of the largest trails in San Jose is a network of concrete-walled canals, reservoirs, and greywater processing plants. Some of these areas have been reclaimed by marginal people and neighborhood freaks, both through habitual occupation and staking claim through garbage.

Valley Water and other city groups clear us out, mow down the native plants, and padlock the entries. Restricting access to these areas is another way of enforcing a policeable, normative choreography within our cities.

MULTIPLE PUBLICS

Ash Amin describes a fellow passenger on an evening train of quiet, politely disengaged commuters collapsing onto the dingy metal floor in sudden and violent agony.The private, contemplative air of the early evening train was disrupted, and the passengers sprung to his aid: calling for doctors, rushing to his side, and organizing aid for him. Their individual, private segments of the public space briefly merged into a commons, united by an ethic of care and a desire to know what would become of the sick man. Amin uses this vignette to introduce ideas about public choreographies and the shifting atmosphere of shared spaces (Amin 241).

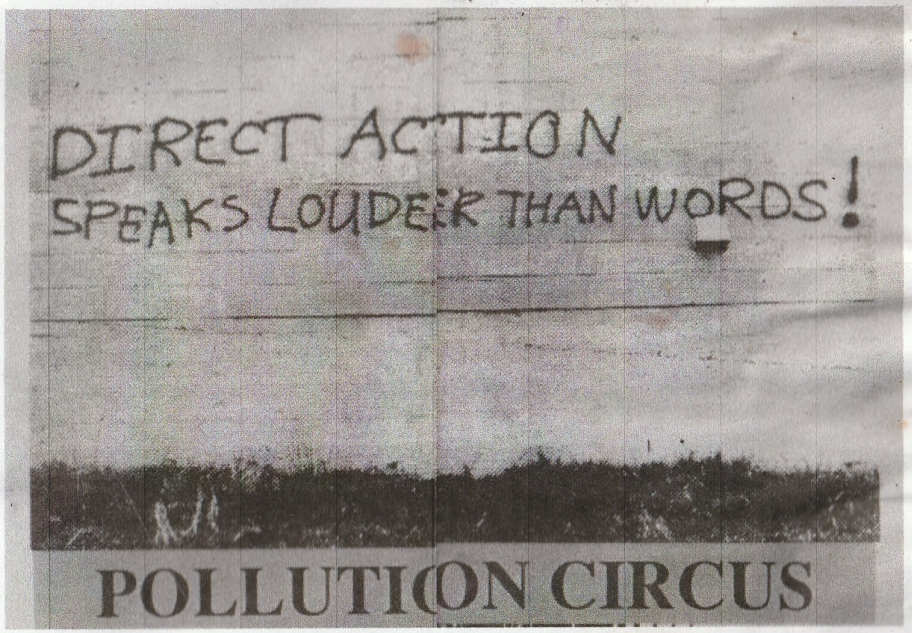
Within crowded public spaces, the individual becomes a social subject prompted to engage with collective concerns. This requires that the individual navigate differences and become a more involved citizen, or remain an isolated individual. Public spaces develop local and political consciousness in those that seek to stake claim to it.

Various geographies of engagement within streets and public squares –markets, workshops, raves, protests, and more abstract claims to space issued by politics or digital superimpositions– influence the affect of place. As more public space is privatized (and therefore heavily regulated), "... Human being itself... shaped by the occupancy of public space... [and the] composite ecology of humans and nonhuman interactions... as a distinctive kind of habit is lost" (Amin 242). A lack of familiarity with alternative choreographies deaden people to what public space can become. They fear sitting on stoops, drawing on walls, carving out gates and doorways where there were once petty barriers. The regulatory power of permits and licenses bar people from organizing block parties and pop-ups for fear of disciplinary action, either from police directly or from conservative bystanders. This sense of helplessness and isolation makes people unwilling to experiment, and they end up fearing conflict more than they fear the loss of the expressive possibility of an urban environment.

In spite of this loss of spatial occupancy knowledge, there are still those hanging on to the promise of a better way. Publics develop ontologies around urban spaces, be they successfully designed or abjectly terrible, in adaptive choreographies of use.

urban sprawls, and 'nice parks' policed by the ring of wealthy suburbanites around them can be used by you, unpermitted, angrily, and on purpose, if you desire it. While bars, alleyways, parking lots, and semi-abandoned buildings offer less friction, all these sites can become public squares with the right kind of engagement and collective desire though all these situations influence the perceived sociality of the space.

DO YOU WANT TO BE MISERABLE FOREVER, OR DO YOU WANT TO FUCKING DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?



FIND PEOPLE. Start simple. Go to your library and go to community events. Don't bitch to me about how it makes you nervous– this is not easy work. This is not comfortable work. If you want to be comfortable, go back to watching youtube shorts in bed. If you want a community, if you want things to get better, you need to go out and meet people in your community.

I have been visiting the physical Internet Archive building on Clement Street in SF. The physical internet archive building provides a meeting place beyond discord forums and reddit threads for strange, wonderful people to solicit strange, wonderful ideas from each other. Every time I have made a pilgrimage to the Archive's vaulted church hall or whitewashed crowded basement, I have met a new artist, activist, or avid reader seeking similar people to build community with. The last time I visited, I made some friends who volunteer at the Archive– they took me on a walk down Clement to visit their art collective. I was given coffee, a tour of their studio, and contact information for everyone I met. Since then we've had multiple follow-up zoom calls teaching each other how to use various digital art programs and physical mediums in pursuit of our various art goals.

The public is alive and desperate for connection. People want to build a community so bad. They're starving for it. Online tools supplement community, allowing us to foster it over a long distance, but it's no real substitute for a meeting-house. The Archive is an invaluable wellspring of knowledge, and pilgrims who visit it will come away with a better understanding of its catalog. They may also find like-minded people who are building other meeting-houses and collecting resources for the betterment of all.

FIND PLACES. Prexisting buildings are one option– studios, shared offices, libraries, people's apartments, parks. This can still be challenging.

Permitting, renting, or appropriating space for holding events and meetings is difficult– see the section with Davis and Wolf-Meyer to better understand why that paucity of resources is an intentional oversight of contemporary urban design. But, as I have hopefully demonstrated by describing Chase and the use of staking claim to unoccupied space, we have an alternative.

Yasudevan, in The City is Ours, describes several hundred students purposefully squatting in Berlin: resisting police, designing the space, and segmenting it into different workshops and living-spaces that offered alternatives to normative culture through site occupation. This text was a really fabulous example of leftists responding to privatization and surveillance of space at the beginning of neoliberalization, developing public cultures and existential territories (in the Guittari sense) to change people's ways of life. Creating a place requires public con-

connsciousness, public culture, deliberate gathering and engaged activism– but the desire is there, it only needs a strong motivation to snap into motion.

Space must be meaningfully redefined and repurposed to suit collective needs. Individual activists in this regard are almost never successful– you need many people for it to be effective. This isn't an individual squatter. This is about deliberate, purposeful tactics of occupation and participatory redesigning of the urban environment.

I think people are a little too afraid of making a scene and deliberately occupying space. I fear that too many people are looking for tidy, photogenic activism. I would prefer tactics like this– accumulation by dispossession– staking claim to public space by thoroughly using it and filling it with artifacts of physical occupation. I don't think that these particular tactics would work here and now in the Bay Area, but I think we have some lessons to learn from it. San Jose activism, especially, is strangely placeless.

There's an incredibly frustrating trend in local organizing where people will alternate between two extremes: posting the exact location of a meeting or event in big bubble-letters on a Canva poster using generic "punk font," or making an equally Pinterestable poster with text saying "ASK AN ANARCHIST FOR THE LOCATION". In both cases, the event is generally held at one of 3 parks in downtown or at the Peace and Justice Center across from the Grocery outlet. I think that rather than posturing with these little posters we should just be less afraid of being shut down and occupying public or abandoned spaces. Realistically, you'll be shut down by cops sooner or later and there's nothing you can do about it besides pack up and make sure that the vulnerable community members get out of dodge first. Why not make the party beautiful, with vibrant tents and lights and music, participatory sculpture and functional spaces, and worry about the shutdown later? I'd rather we just build something inviting and move it when we have to. Why are we so fucking worried about being polite?

People are just defeatist, and too willing to dismiss leftist tactics as "unreasonable" rather than situated in a specific time and context. We can still learn from these tactics. We can be urban insurgents without being offputtingly self-obsessed and congratulatory. We can occupy space without endangering our fellow citizens. We can redesign and reorganize space if we aren't too chicken to do so.

defining space in the 'right' p
ical way takes time and argu-
ment before an area can be